

PHOTOGRAPHY IN NEW YORK

INTERNATIONAL

ABOUT THE COVER



Marla Sweeney moved to upstate New York more than a year ago and quickly began taking pictures of the people she encountered in the area surrounding where she lives. Among those she photographed was Justine, the subject of our cover (detail). The image is part of an exhibition of Sweeney's new color photographs at the Yossi Milo Gallery on view from January 25 to March 1. Sweeney got to know Justine and her family briefly during the summer of 2001, says Milo, and one morning she happened to be there when Justine was waking up; as she was sitting there in her

nightgown, stretching, Sweeney took her picture. "The gestures of the little girl, the mirror in the background, the flowers—it all makes the image very angelic and ethereal," observes Milo. "Her subjects always seem to feel very comfortable with her. There's a great sense of human dignity in her photographs."

Sweeney herself has called her portraits "a combination of confrontation and intimacy," adding, "A portrait is as much about the photographer as it is about the subject. You see yourself most clearly when you see yourself as a stranger." Sweeney's intimate, documentary portrait style has affinities with the work of Shelby Lee Adams, among others, in her sympathetic regard for her subjects and her focus on ordinary people in small towns. Her previous series, *Home As Found*, focused primarily on small towns in central Texas, combining portraiture with elements of landscape photography to suggest a way of life and a sense of community. Her new work, like *Home As Found*, revolves around the themes of family, community, home and tradition.

A native of Lowell, Massachusetts, Sweeney has an MFA in photography from the State University of New York at New Paltz, and she completed the masters class at Bard College with Larry Fink and Stephen Shore. "She's just a wonderful photographer," says Milo, who first saw her images several years ago at FotoFest. "I think there's something magical about her work."

Jean Dykstra

the village VOICE

PHOTO

Reviews by VINCE ALETTI

MARLA SWEENEY Sweeney's color photos of central Texas are modest and almost traditional in their attention to and respect for the simple dailyness of small-town life. Though some of her subjects are ripe for satire, her pictures treat them with restrained affection—a warmth that doesn't blunt Sweeney's pictorial bite. In one photo, a gray-haired woman sits on her front porch, a little white poodle perched on her lap, but Sweeney slices the woman into a neat sliver at the left of the frame, demolishing the picture's corniness but preserving its soul. **THROUGH JULY 12**, Gallery 24, 552 West 24th Street, 414-0370. (Aletti)